



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

March 3, 2005

# News Release

## **OPERATION PREDATOR ARRESTS SURPASS 5,000**

*Arizona accounts for nearly 200 arrests in initiative targeting child sex predators*

PHOENIX – Nearly 200 of the 5,000 child sex offenders arrested by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) as part of an ongoing international initiative known as Operation Predator have occurred in Arizona. Statewide, the targets have included a French tourist, a Tucson martial arts instructor, and a Tongan national who sexually molested his own seven-year-old daughter.

Michael J. Garcia, Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for ICE, announced today that arrests in the 20-month long effort have surpassed 5,000 nationwide. Operation Predator is a comprehensive initiative targeting those who prey on and exploit children, including human traffickers, international sex tourists, Internet pornographers, and foreign national predators whose crimes make them deportable.

So far, there have been 187 Predator-related arrests in Arizona since the initiative began in July 2003, ranking it seventh among states nationwide. Phoenix accounted for the largest number of arrests (108), followed by Tucson (56), Nogales (20), Yuma (2), and Douglas (1).

“Sexual predators will not go unpunished for their heinous crimes,” said Garcia. “Whether the criminal is a U.S. citizen who thinks they can travel overseas to molest children or a pornographer who trades in images of child sexual abuse, or a foreign national who has lost the privilege to remain in the U.S. because of a crime against a child, ICE will identify, arrest, and, where possible, remove them.”

Operation Predator evolved out of ICE’s mission to find and deport illegal aliens -- particularly those with criminal records, and reflects the agency’s traditional public safety mission. Those arrested fall into four general categories:

**Foreign National Child Predators:** More than 85 percent of the arrests made as part of Operation Predator have been arrests of foreign national sex offenders whose crimes make them removable from the United States. To date, more than 2,100 of these predators have been deported. Locally, those cases include:

***Tongan Who Molested his Daughter for More than a Decade:*** Earlier this week, ICE in Phoenix deported a Tongan national who was convicted and served time in California for sexually abusing

his biological daughter over a ten-year period, beginning when she was seven. Sali Hefa Aho, 50, was arrested by ICE agents in San Francisco in November 2003. Aho, a legal permanent resident, was ordered deported by an immigration judge in February 2004, based on his criminal conviction. Aho appealed his removal all the way to the 9<sup>th</sup> U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. He ultimately lost his legal battle and was returned to Tonga Tuesday under ICE escort.

**International Child Sex Tourists:** Working cooperatively with foreign governments through ICE's attaché offices worldwide, ICE agents made the first 12 arrests under the child sex tourism provisions of the PROTECT Act. Consider this case:

- ❑ ***French National Arrested at Tucson Airport on Child Sex Tourism Charges:*** ICE agents arrested 30-year-old Sebastian Sarraute at the Tucson airport in September 2004 when he arrived from Paris allegedly to finalize plans to have arranged sex with underage girls in Mexico. Sarraute was taken into custody minutes after his connecting flight from Paris touched down. Sarraute is the first person in Arizona to face child sex tourism charges brought under the provisions of the PROTECT Act, which strengthened U.S. laws against child sex tourism by modifying the burden of proof requirements for federal prosecutors to bring charges.

**Human Smuggling & Trafficking of Children:** The criminal networks engaged in human smuggling and trafficking have become more violent and more profit-driven than ever before. At the same time, some of their victims are getting younger and younger. Consider this example:

- ❑ ***Southern California Couple Charged for Holding Egyptian Girl as Domestic Slave:*** Eid Youssef Ibrahim, 44, and Amal Ahmed Ewis-abd Motelib, 41, were indicted by a grand jury in Santa Ana, California, on involuntary servitude charges for allegedly enslaving a 12-year-old girl in the garage of their Irvine home for two years and forcing her to work as a domestic servant for their family. The couple, who were married at the time of the alleged offense, are accused of conspiring to hold the victim in involuntary servitude and obtain her services by force and coercion.

**Internet Child Pornography:** Drawing on ICE's cyber crime investigative expertise, ICE is tackling the crimes that cross the nation's virtual borders. Moreover, through the National Child Victim Identification System, more than 1,600 pornographic images containing child pornography have been authenticated.

- ❑ ***Tucson Martial Arts Instructor Indicted in International Child Porn Probe:*** David Michael Lader, 40, was indicted by a federal grand jury in Tucson in July 2004 for possessing and receiving child pornography. The case stems from leads generated by an ICE investigation into a Belarus-based company called Regpay that provided credit card billing services for some 50 child pornography websites. Forensic analysis of personal computers taken from the local martial arts instructor's residence turned up more than 1,000 images of child pornography.

Additional information about Operation Predator is available on the Web at [www.ice.gov](http://www.ice.gov). ICE encourages the reporting of suspected child predators and any suspicious activity through its toll-free hotline at 1-866-DHS-2ICE. This hotline is staffed around the clock by investigators.

Suspected child sexual exploitation or missing children may be reported to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, an Operation Predator partner, at 1-800-843-5678 or <http://www.cybertipline.com>.

**Editor's Note: B-roll, including video of arrests, an interview with Assistant Secretary Garcia, and graphics will be available via satellite at 1:00 p.m. MST. The coordinates for the video feed are: GALAXY 3/C-Band Transponder 6, Vertical: 95° West, Downlink frequency: 3820 Mhz.**

#ICE#

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*